

**Lake and Peninsula Borough**

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December 27, 2005

Mr. Jeff Ottesen, Director
Division of Program Development
Alaska DOT/PF
3132 Channel Drive, Room 200
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Mr.  Ottesen:

The Lake and Peninsula Borough and I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft 2006-2009 STIP. In general the STIP process, at one time, worked pretty well. However, in the recent past tight money, politics and the ever changing staff within AK DOT/PF have made for a much less reliable process, or at least it certainly "feels" that way.

First, we realize many projects are being "moved out a few years" due to dwindling Federal Dollars and the resulting re-prioritization. Community's who have had projects delayed because of this process, including Lake and Peninsula Borough, find it frustrating. It is possible for us to re-submit additional information for each project of course, in the hopes we can get it ranked higher by the PEB. But in the simplest terms, the bottom line appears to be "urban" will beat out "rural" in almost all cases simply because of the number of residents served...a hard fact to argue with...but why continue to go through the process?

Williamsport-Pile Bay Road and Ports Project

Of concern too, is the status of federal monies ear-marked for the Williamsport Pile Bay Road and the Chignik Inter-Village Road Project? We are concerned the outlook of some within DOT might be that the WPPB Road is part of the overall Pebble Mine Project. The "jury is still out" on the mine. It will be for several years. The actual route of a possible "haul road" is still undecided and future routes may or may not, include part of the WPPB road. However, the need for drainage and road improvements on the Williamsport Pile Bay Road is immediate. The WPPB Road is one of the highest priorities in the Southwest Transportation Plan, a DOT/PF planning work product.

Using federally earmarked funds, the Lake and Peninsula Borough would like to see the project put out to bid ASAP to promote safer, more reliable freight transport into the Iliamna Lake region. The longer this project is delayed, the more the needed upgrades and improvements are going to cost. The weather over the past couple of years, has done tremendous damage in various locations along the road and has "blown out" entire drainage facilities. If the mine is someday permitted and built, it is expected that thousands of tons of equipment and freight will need to be transported over the Williamsport Pile Bay Road prior to mine construction, facilities construction or haul road construction. The Borough will get a lot more bang for the federal buck if the work gets done sooner rather than later.

Chignik Inter-village Road/Regional Airport

The Borough also encourages DOT/PF to continue to move the Chignik Inter-Village Road Project forward in the most expedient manner possible using federal earmarked funds. It is an accepted fact project costs increase over time due to inflation and increased material/labor expense. Connecting the three Chignik villages by road has become more critical recently as the price of fuel continues to escalate creating significantly higher energy and transportation costs in the villages. The cost per gallon would be drastically reduced if fuel could be trucked into the villages of Chignik Lagoon and Chignik Lake rather than barged and lightered ashore in small quantities.

Safety concerns owing to limited air access for medivacs would be addressed too by the construction of one airport for the three Chignik villages, providing adequate runway length & width with lighting and navigation aids. In addition, a longer runway (4400 feet +) would provide greater economy of scale by allowing larger aircraft with greater payload capacity to transport Chignik's fresh fish to markets in the lower 48. These markets already exist and have become more lucrative each year, however, are difficult and expensive to supply by air due to the limited payload of smaller aircraft required by the short village runways.

Iliamna-Nondalton Road and Bridge Project

Finally, the Lake and Peninsula Borough once again, reiterates its on-going, strong support for the Iliamna-Nondalton Road and Bridge Project. Further, we thank the State for their tireless and persistent effort as they work toward the project's completion. The borough requests the department continue to take all appropriate steps to expedite the environmental re-evaluation of the project and get the project under construction award. It is extremely disheartening to have projects of this caliber stalled, for all intents and purposes, on the whim of one individual.

In spite of recent claims, the Iliamna-Nondalton Road and Bridge Project is not related to the Pebble Mine and never has been. It is a project that has been "in process" (thanks to Trout Unlimited and Bob Gillam) for well over 10 years. When did Pebble Mine become an issue? Hopefully someone investigating the latest Gilliam/Trout complaint will wake up and "do the math" (with a bit of luck, they will think to examine the Williamsport Pile

Bay Road issue at the same time, under the same criteria). Improving any road within 50 or 60 miles of Keyes Point on Lake Clark has got to be mine related, right?

People have almost certainly died as a result of the Iliamna-Nondalton Road/Bridge Project being stalled! Village residents continue to pay horrendous prices for groceries, heating oil and gasoline because they are forced to "fly it in" without a road and bridge. Village safety is jeopardized too as aircraft are not always able to get into Nondalton due to weather or other marginal landing conditions.

And how much money would be saved annually if Nondalton, Iliamna and Newhalen were all connected by a road? Think about it...the potential of one landfill; one large school with increased opportunities (educational and social); cheaper groceries; cheaper heating oil and gasoline; cheaper transportation in and out of the village or the region; improved access to routine health care and critical emergency care; the ability to frequently visit with friends and relatives in neighboring villages and around the Lake; and, increased business and employment opportunities, especially for younger residents. The list goes on and on.

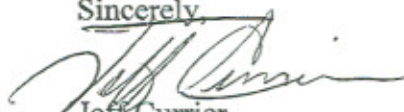
But hey, everyone realizes it is way more important to protect one guys fishing hole, right? Everyone knows building a bridge across any river will create a total devastation of the existing fishery. Besides, the bridge would only be about twelve miles away from Gillam's Keyes Point Lodge, completely hidden from any possible lodge view due to a series of peninsulas in the way. That's got to be NIMBY to the 4th power!!

Mr. Gillam's ability to impress his clients is obviously way more important to him than the health and well-fair of the local population! His clients need the chance to get away from the stress of making all that money. They absolutely need the best food and drink money can buy while at his private retreat. They deserve to "catch their weight in fish" every day and backhaul hundreds of pounds annually to their respective corner of "America". It's not selfish...it's just good business...

Somebody spent a small fortune purchasing all the first quality material it took to build the lodge and other facilities at Keyes Point. How many C-130 loads was it Bob? Some say 18. Is that about right? 8 or 18, it makes little difference because the cost of one C-130 Herc load would out of the question for most. Probably has been a great business write-off and tax deduction though...It is a sad statement when the courts continuously allow so called "Good Business" to completely outweigh human need.

Thanks again for the opportunity to provide input.

Sincerely,



Jeff Currier
Borough Manager